SwissCore
Contact Office for European Research
Innovation and Education

National Research Council of Italy

Event report:

European Cybersecurity Challenges

Topic	**SwissCore-CNR webinar: European Cybersecurity Challenges**
Date:	30.11.2020
Venue:	Online
Moderator:	Otto Bruun, European Advisor for Innovation (SwissCore)

On 30 November, 2020, Swisscore and CNR hosted the webinar, "European Cybersecurity Challenges" with the support of the Swiss Mission to the European Union and the Sparta Cybersecurity Network. The goal of the webinar was to inform on current and future European initiatives in Cybersecurity research and innovation, and foster dialogue and collaboration between Swiss and European Union actors in addressing the common challenges in the field. More than 80 representatives of the European cybersecurity community, from policy-makers to researchers and end-users, participated in this online event. Special guest speakers to set the scene included **Claudia Gamon, Member of the European Parliament,** and **Martin Übelhör, Head of Sector at the European Commission** for Cybersecurity, industry, and Innovation. Three representatives of European and Swiss initiatives in the research and innovation community offered presentations on current and future activities and possibilities for mutual engagement between the European Union and Switzerland. The event was moderated by Otto Bruun (Swisscore).

Introduction

Nicolas Lüscher, Minister at the Swiss Mission to the European Union, and responsible for Parliamentary affairs, welcomed the participants and stressed the importance of partnership and collaboration in addressing common challenges, as the current sanitary crisis has shown our dependence on interconnected systems. In order to address the rising risks in the digital sphere, he argued that Swiss leadership in academic and industrial research as well the Swiss start-up ecosystem can contribute greatly to ensuring Europe's autonomy and ability to thrive in accordance with our shared values. He also assured the audience of the Swiss commitment to continuing the strong and mutually beneficial partnership with the European Union, especially in the digital area.

Angelo Volpi, Science and Technology officer at the CNR liaison office in Brussels, spoke of the strong collaboration of CNR and the Swiss research and innovation ecosystem in artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, which can help pool the best competences and resources that can ensure the security and privacy of Europe's citizenry. He stressed the role of CNR in the European cybersecurity ecosystem, especially in its coordinating role in the Italian committee on research in Cybersecurity, active since 2017, and through its national cybersecurity observatory. CNR is also among the five founders of the European public-private partnership in cybersecurity, established in 2016, and the only public research institutions among them, as well as a member of 2 of the pilot projects of the European Competence Centre in Cybersecurity.

Claudia Gamon, Member of the European Parliament, Vice chair of the Delegation for Northern cooperation and for relations with Switzerland and Norway, as well as shadow rapporteur for the proposed regulation establishing the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre. She spoke of the importance of working together to address cybersecurity challenges, and avoiding scattered regionalism. The goals of the joint cyber unit include its most important steps building trust among the actors of the cybersecurity ecosystem. A Union security strategy will serve to help building capacities for early detection, prevention and rapid response to crises. ENISA should not be forgotten, and is an important support mechanism for defending member states and helps build cooperation between member states. Ms. Gamon highlighted the importance of research in cybersecurity, to have capabilities and make companies and people aware of the security issue. The role of the Cybersecurity Competence Centre is to bundle competences at the European level. The goal is to include the research community, represented by an advisory board informing the direction of the Centre. She spoke of the agreement among EU institutions on the tasks and objectives of the Centre, and the different views that remain on how centralized the role of the scientific advisory boards. She highlighted the work still needed on the financing of the Centre. Cybersecurity is not just a research topic, it is about building resilience, and protecting our infrastructure and our citizens in their everyday lives, and so it is important to make our commitments strong.

Martin Übelhör, Head of Sector for Cybersecurity, Industry and Innovation at the European Commission, presented the EU programmes for Cybersecurity research and innovation. He introduced the challenges as seen at the European level, from capacity building to information sharing and from skills to commercialization of research and development efforts. He spoke of the goal of creating a denser ecosystem of actors working together across sectors and across member states. The [four pilot projects](#) are instrumental in advancing this ecosystem approach, as is the [European Cybersecurity organization](#) (ECSO). The new competence centre that they will lead to will serve, not only to foster research and innovation, but also the deployment and uptake of new technology and knowledge. The Centre will be a combination of a funding agency and a networking agency, supported by a network of national coordination centres.

As the webinar moved to discussion of specific initiatives within the broader landscape of Cybersecurity research and innovation, **Fabio Martinelli, Partnership Director of the [SPARTA](#) network**, offered details on the approach, the structure, the roadmap, and the ongoing activities of the initiative. He spoke of the **aim to cooperate with the strong Swiss scientific research and innovation community** and build strong links for further cooperation. He offered an overview of the 44 partners of the network, and the goal of developing organic growth through a partnership programme with different possible levels of engagement. The structure is bottom-up with a roadmap for 10 years, with developing activities for a broadening partnership. The activities include a common working environment, a cyber-range, and a virtual learning centre pooling knowledge and e-learning resources.

The Swiss research and innovation community was represented **by Srdjan Capkun, chair of the [Zurich Information Security and Privacy Centre](#) (ZISC).** He spoke of the activities of the Centre in addressing the issue of trust in the many cyber-physical systems that we rely on. He spoke of Swiss competencies at other Swiss institutions the [CSS](#) at ETH Zurich, the [Cyber-defence Campus](#) and the [Centre for Digital Trust](#). He highlighted the best practices at the ZISC on academic-industry collaboration and the broader start-up community in Switzerland with a link to the Academic research institutes. He also exemplified the applications of the research conducted with the Swiss contribution to innovation in mobility security and in addressing the Coronavirus crisis with secure contact tracing technology. His presentation was complemented by Lennig Pedron, **Director of the Swiss [Trust Valley](#) cybersecurity cluster**. As a public-private partnership or regional players in Western Switzerland, it focuses on having a global impact through the collaboration of research institutes and private industry. Among its important initiatives she mentioned its key initiative the Tech4Trust start-up accelerator in the field of digital trust. The first

pilot of last year will be followed by a second edition this year, with a format of five-month programme for accelerating **20 promising Swiss and European start-ups**. The goal is to humanize the digital world. These presentations were complemented by reactions from, **Eda Aygen, ECSO head of communications**, and **Florent Kirchner, Strategic Director of the Sparta network.** Ms. Aygen presented the role of ECSO in the current European landscape of cybersecurity actors, and their role in the development of the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre. Mr. Kirchner highlighted the importance of disrupting the way cybersecurity research and innovation is conducted in Europe, not only in the governance, but in how the ecosystem actors are invited collaborate and encourage trust across the region from researchers to end-users.